

*1679* The point of  
**CHURCH-UNITY**  
AND *697. a 33*  
**SCHISM** Discuss'd,  
BY A  
**NONCONFORMIST**  
With respect to the  
**Church-Divisions**  
IN  
**ENGLAND.**

---

*2*  
**LONDON,**  
Printed for *Thomas Parkhurst*, at  
the *Bible and Three Crowns* at the  
Lower end of *Cheapside*. 1679.

CHURCH DIVISIONS

OF THE

ANGLO-SAXON

Church Divisions



ENGLAND

LONDON

Printed for Thomas Foulsham, at the  
the Bible and the Survey of the  
Tower and of the City, 1879

# THE CONTENTS.

## CHAP. I.

*Of the Church and its Polity.*

**W**Hat the Church is both in its invisible and visible state. The state of the Church Catholick. The state of particular Churches, and their Pastors, Elders or Bishops. Of the partition of Churches by local bounds. Of the Interests of Bishops or Pastors in any assigned circuit of Ground. Of the association or combination of Churches. Of a National Church. Of the Interest of Civil Magistrates in the state of the Church. Of a Diocese and a Diocesan Bishop. Of exercising the Ministry without Subordination to a Diocesan Bishop. No human power may prejudice Christs Interest in his Ministers or People. All have a judgment of Discretion about their own acts.

CHAP.

*Of true Church-Unity.*

*The names of Unity and Schism should be rightly applied. True Church-Unity is the Unity of the Spirit; what is included therein. True Unity is primarily of the Church in its mystical, secondarily in its visible state. Holy love is the Life and Soul of this Unity. Church-Unity considered in three points. 1. In the essentials and all weighty matters of Christian Faith and Life. 2. In the essentials and integrals of Church-state. 3. In the accidentals of Religion. The different value of these different points of Unity. The Rule of Unity is Gods Word. Of the Scriptures sufficiency as a Rule thereof. Of things left to human determination, with the Pastors and Magistrates Interest therein. The Rulers Wisdom in setting the right bounds of Unity. The burden of things unnecessary not to be laid on the Churches. Unity of external order is subservient to Faith and Holiness.*



CHAP. III.  
Of Schism truly so called.

Schism is the violation of the Unity of the Spirit. Separation and Schism are not of equal extent. The violation of holy Love is the root of Schism. Schism lies primarily in a breach made upon the Unity of the Church as mystical, and secondarily as visible. The highest point of Schism against the Church as visible, is that which is about the essentials and weighty matters of Christian Faith and Life. How both Persons and Churches may be guilty of it. The next point of Schism is about the essentials and integrals of Church state. This may be either against the Catholick or a particular Church; Instances of both kinds. The lowest point of Schism is about the accidentals of Religion. How any are guilty or not guilty in this point. A preposterous valuation made of the aforesaid different points, tends to Schism. The setting of other bounds of Unity, than Gods word allows, is to make a breach upon it. Terms of Unity may be allowed

ed of God as to the Submitters, when they are not allowed as to the Imposers. The danger of acting against conscience rationally doubting. 'Tis a false Unity that is set up to the hindrance of Faith and Holiness; and not to adhere to it is no Schism but Duty; Instances hereof. Of the right of drawing together into new Congregations on such occasion. What endeavour of Reformation is unlawfull to Subjects. A difference between inimical separation and amicable necessary Segregation. The objected inconveniences against the amicable Segregation answered. The import of the Text, Rom. 16. 17. opened.

#### C H A P. IV.

*Of the Schisms that were in the more ancient times of the Church, and the different case of the Nonconformists in these times.*

*Of the Donatists. Of the Novatians. Whether the case of the present Nonconformists be the same with the case of these or any others anciently reputed Schis-*

*Schismaticks. The case of such Nonconformists, as be more remote from accommodation with the Established Order. The case of such of them, as be more disposed to accommodation. An Answer to objections against relaxing the terms of Conformity. Of diverse other remarkable Schisms in the ancient times; and the Nonconformists case different from theirs. An appeal to Antiquity and to our Superiors.*

## CHAP. V.

*Of making a right estimate of the guilt of Schism, and something more of the right way to Unity.*

*The great abuse of the name Schism, and the bad consequence thereof. The degree of the Schism to be duly considered for making an equal judgment of the guilt thereof. Examples of Schismatical animosities in Worthies of ancient times. Charity in censuring thence inferred. True Unity is founded in true Holiness, and promoted by impartiality and equity towards all real Christi-*

Christians, and by the due exercise of true Church-Discipline, and by removing the snares of Division; and as by the equity and charity of Superiors, so by the humility and due submission of Inferiors. A Question considered about the warrantableness of submission to things not in themselves unlawfull, but inexpedient.

---

### *Errata.*

Pag. 2. lin. 2. r. regeneration, p. 12. l. 8. r. without, ib. l. 16. r. and in, p. 22. l. 6. r. due extent, p. 25. l. 14. r. account of accidental, p. 32. l. 16. r. injured Christians as are, p. 33. l. 25. r. Segregation, p. 42. l. 27. r. renouncing, p. 47. l. 21. r. deposed.

---



The point of  
**CHURCH-UNITY**  
AND  
*SCHISM Discuss'd.*

---

CHAP. I.

*Of the Church and its Polity.*



He Church is a Spiritual  
Common-wealth, which  
according to its primary  
and invifible State is a  
Society of regenerate Per-  
fons, who are joyned  
to the Lord Chrift their  
Head, and one to another as fellow Members  
by a myftical Union through the Holy Spirit,  
and are juftified, Sanctified, and adopted to the  
inheritance of Eternal Life; but according to  
B its

its secondary and visible state, it is a Society of Persons professing Christianity or Regeneration, and externally joyned to Christ, and to one another by the Symbals of that Profession, and made partakers of the external priviledges thereunto belonging.

There is one Catholick Church, which according to the invisible Form, is the whole company of true Believers throughout the World; and according to its visible Form, is the whole company of visible Believers throughout the World, or Believers according to human judgment.

This Church hath one Head and Supream Lord, even Christ, and one Charter and System of Laws; the Word of God and Members, that are free Denizons of the whole Society, and one Form of Admission or solemn Initiation for its Members, and one kind of Ministry and Ecclesiastical Power.

This Church hath not the power of its own Fundamental Constitution, or of the Laws, and Officers, and Administrations intrinsically belonging to it, but hath received all these from Christ its Head, King and Lawgiver, and is limited by him in them all. Nevertheless, it hath according to the capacity of its acting, that is, according to its several parts a power of making Secondary Laws or Canons, either to impress the Laws of Christ upon its Members, or to regulate circumstantial and acci-

accidentals in Religion, by determining things necessary in *genere*, not determined of Christ in *specie*.

As the Scripture sets forth one Catholick Church, so also many particular Churches, as so many Political Societies distinct from each other, yet all compacted together as parts of that one ample Society, the Catholick Church.

Each of these particular Churches have their proper Elder or Elders, Pastor or Pastors, having authority of teaching and ruling them in Christs name. An Ecclesiastical Order of Presbyters or Elders, that are not Bishops, is not found in holy Scripture. For all Presbyters or Elders, being of a sacred Order in the Gospel Church that are any where mentioned in Scripture, are therein set forth as Bishops truly and properly so called, and are no where set forth as less than Bishops. These Elders or Bishops are Personally to Superintend all their Flock, and there is no grant from Christ to discharge the same by Delegates or Substitutes.

A distinction between Bishops and Presbyters, and a Superiority of the former over the latter, was after the Scripture times anciently and generally received in the Christian Church. Yet it was not a diversity of Orders or Offices essentially different, but of degrees in the same Office, the essential nature whereof is in both. The Bishop of the first

Ages was a Bishop not of a multitude of Churches, but of one stated Ecclesiastical Society or single Church, whereof he was an immediate Pastor; and he performed the work of a Bishop, or immediate Pastor towards them all in his own Person, and not by Delegates and Substitutes; and he governed not alone, but in conjunction with the Presbyters of his Church, he being the President.

Though several Cities in the same Kingdom have their different municipal Laws and Priviledges according to the diversity of their Charters, yet particular Churches have no Divine Laws and Priviledges diverse from each other, but the same in common to them all, because they have all the same Charter in *specie* from Christ. Therefore each of them have the same power of Government within themselves. And the qualifications requisite to make men Members or Ministers of the Universal Church, do according to Christs Law sufficiently qualifie them to be Members or Ministers of any particular Church, to which they have a due and orderly call.

Local, presential Communion in Gods Ordinances, being a main end of erecting particular Churches, they should in all reason consist of Persons, who by their cohabitation in a vicinity are capable of such Communion, and there may not be a greater local distance of the Persons than can stand with it.



A Bishops Church was anciently made up of the Christians of a City or Town, and the adjacent Villages, who might and did Personally meet together, both for Worship and Discipline.

All Christians of the same local Precinct are most conveniently brought into one and the same stated Church, that there might be the greatest Union among them, and that the occasion of straggling and running into several Parties might be avoided. Yet this local partition of Churches is not of absolute necessity and invariable, but if there be some insuperable impediment thereof, the partition must be made as the state of things will admit.

No Bishop or Pastor can by Divine right or warrant, claim any assigned circuit of Ground as his propriety for Ecclesiastical Government, as a Prince claims certain Territories as his propriety for Civil Government; so that no other Bishop or Pastor may without his Licence, do the work of the Ministry, in any case whatsoever within that Circuit.

It is not the conjunction of a Bishop or Pastor with the generallity or the greater number of the People, that of it self declares the only rightfull Pastor or true Church within this or that Circuit. For many causes may require and justify the being of other Churches therein.

Seeing particular Churches are so many integral parts of the Catholick Church, and stand in need of each others help in things that concern them joyntly and severally, and they have all an influence on each other, the Law of Nature leads them to Affociations or Combinations greater and lesser, according to their capacities. And the orderly state that is requisite in all Affociations, doth naturally require some regular Subordination in the several parts thereof, either in way of proper authority or of mutual agreement. And the Associated Churches and particular Members therein, are naturally bound to maintain the orderly state of the whole Affociation, and to comply with the Rules thereof, when they are not repugnant to the Word of God.

A Bishop or Pastor and the People adhering to him, are not declared to be the only true Church and Pastor within such a Precinct, by their conjunction with the largest Combination of Bishops or Pastors and their Churches. For the greater number of Bishops may in such manner err in their Constitutions, as to make rightly informed Persons incapable of their Combination.

A National Church is not a particular Church properly so called, but a Combination or Coagmentation of particular Churches, united under one Civil Supream, either Personal as in a Monarchy, or Collective as in a Republick.

lick. And the true notion thereof lies not in any Combination purely Ecclesiastical and Intrinfecal, but Civil and Extrinfecal, as of so many Churches that are collected under one that hath the Civil Supremacy over them. The National Church of *England* truly denotes all the Churches in *England* united under one Supream Civil Church-Governour, the Kings Majesty.

Civil Magistrates as such, are no Constitutive parts of the Church. The Christian Church stood for several Centuries without the support of their authority. But Supream Magistrates have a Civil Supremacy in all Ecclesiastical matters, and a political, extrinfecal Episcopacy over all the Pastors of the Churches in their Dominions, and may compell them to the performance of their Duties, and punish them for negligence and mal-Administration; and they may reform the Churches, when they stand in need of Reformation.

The possession of the Tithes and Temples doth not of it self declare the true Pastor and Church, nor doth the Privation thereof declare no Pastor and no Church. For these are disposed of by the secular power, which of it self can neither make, nor make void a Pastor or Church.

A Diocess is a collective body of many Parishes under the Government of one Diocesan. If the several Parishes be so many par-

particular Churches, and if their proper and immediate Presbyters be of the same order with those which in Scripture are mentioned by that name, and were no other than Bishops or Pastors; then a Diocess is not a particular Church, but a Combination of Churches, and the Diocesan is a Bishop of Bishops, or Governour over many Churches and their immediate Bishops. If the Parishes be not acknowledged to be Churches, nor their Presbyters to be really Bishops or Pastors, but the Diocess be held to be the lowest Political Church, and the Diocesan to be a Bishop of the lowest rank, and the sole Bishop or Pastor of all the included Parishes; I confess, I have no knowledge of the Divine right of such a Church or Bishop, or of any precept or precedent thereof in Scripture. For every particular Church mentioned in Scripture was but one distinct stated Society, having its own proper and immediate Bishop or Bishops, Elder or Elders, Pastor or Pastors, who did Personally and immediately Superintend over the whole Flock, which ordinarily held either at once together, or by turns Personal, present Communion with each other in Gods Worship. But a Diocess consists of several stated Societies, to wit, the Parishes which are Constituted severally of a proper and immediate Presbyter or Elder having cure of Souls, and commonly called a Rector, and the Peo-

ple which are his proper and immediate charge or cure. And the People of the Diocess do not live under the Personal and immediate oversight of their Dioceſan, but under his Delegates and Subſtitutes. Nor do they ordinarily hold Personal preſent Communion with each other in Gods Worſhip, either at once together or by turns. Nevertheless, which way ſoever a Diocess be conſidered, I have nothing to object againſt ſubmiſſion to the Government of the Dioceſan, as an Eccleſiaſtical Officer eſtabliſhed by the Law of the Land under the Kings Supremacy.

There is nothing in the nature of the Office of Presbyterate (which according to the Scripture is a Paſtoral Office) that ſhews it ought to be exerciſed no otherwiſe than in Subordination to a Dioceſan Biſhop. Chriſt, who is the Author and only proper giver of all Spiritual Authority in the Church, hath not ſo limited the ſaid Office; and men cannot by any act of theirs enlarge or leſſen it as to its nature or eſſential ſtate, or define it otherwiſe than it is ſtated of Chriſt in his word.

No power Eccleſiaſtical or Civil can diſcharge any Miniſter of Chriſt from the exerciſe of his Miniſtery in thoſe circumſtances, wherein Chriſt commands him to exerciſe it, nor any Chriſtians from thoſe duties of Religion, to which the Command of Chriſt obligeth them.

As the Magistrate is to judge what Laws touching Religion are fit for him to enact and execute, so the Ministers of Christ are to use a judgment of discretion about their own Pastoral acts; and all Christians are to do the same about their own acts of Church-Communion. The too common abuse of the judgment of discretion cannot abrogate the right use thereof, it being so necessary that without it men cannot act as men, nor offer to God a reasonable Service.

---

## C H A P. II.

### *Of true Church-Unity.*

**W**Hen the names of Unity and Schism are by partiality and selfishness commonly and grossly abused and misapplied, the nature of the things to which those names do of right belong, ought to be diligently inquired into, and clearly and distinctly laid open. For a groundwork in this inquiry I fix upon two very noted texts of Scripture. The one is *Eph.* 4. 3. *Indeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.* The other is *Rom.* 16. 17. *Mark them that cause Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine that ye have learned, and avoid them.*

them. The former guides us to the knowledge of true Church-unity, and the latter shews us the true nature of Schism.

By the former of these Texts, all Christians are obliged to maintain that Spiritual Unity, which they have one with another under Christ their Head, by the Holy Ghost in all due acts of holy Communion in Peace and Concord. Several important things are here to be taken notice of.

1. There is a Spiritual unity between all Christians in the form of one mystical Body, as there is a natural unity between all the members of the natural Body. The members being many are one body and members one of another. 2. This Unity is under Christ as the Head of it. What the head is to the natural Body, that is Christ and much more to his mystical Body the Church. 3. This Unity of Christians one with another under Christ, is by the Holy Ghost, and therefore called the Unity of the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ the Head, doth seize upon and reside in all the Faithfull, by which they become Christs mystical Body, and are joyned one to another as fellow-members. 4. This Unity of the Spirit among Christians is witnessed, maintained, and strengthened by their holy communion of Love and Peace one with another, but is darkened, weakened, and lessened by their uncharitable Dissentions.

Hence

Hence it is evident that the Unity here commended, is primarily that of the Church in its internal and invisible State, or the Union and Communion of Saints, having in themselves the Spirit, and Life, and Power of Christianity. Tis the unity of the Spirit we are charged to keep in the bond of Peace. But concord in any external order with a vital Union with Christ and holy Souls, his living members, is not the unity of the Spirit, which is to partake of the same new Nature and Divine Life. Secondly, it is the Unity of the Church in its external and visible State, which is consequent and subservient to the internal, and stands in the profession and appearance of it, in the professed observation of the duties arising from it. Where there is not a credible Profession of Faith unfeigned and true Holiness, there is not so much as the external and visible Unity of the Spirit. Therefore a sensual Earthly generation of men, who are apparently lead by the Spirit of the World, and not by the Spirit that is of God, have little cause to glory in their adhering to an external Church order, whatsoever it be.

Holy love, which is unselfed and impartial, is the Life and Soul of this unity, without which it is but a dead thing, as the Body without the Soul is dead. And this love is the bond of perfectness, that Cement, that holds altogether in this mystical Society.

For



For this being seated in the several members, disposeth them to look, not to their own things, but also to the things of others, and not to the undue advancement of a Party, but to the common good of the whole Body. Whosoever wants this love, hath no vital Union with Christ and the Church, and no part in the Communion of Saints. The Church is much more ennobled, strengthened, and every way blessed by the Communion of holy love among all its living members, or real Christians, than by an outside uniformity in the minute circumstances, or accidental modes of Religion. By this love it is more beautifull and lovely in the eyes of all intelligent beholders, than by outward pomp and ornament, or any worldly splendor.

The Unity of the Church as visible, whether Catholick or particular, may be considered in a three-fold respect, or in three very different points. The first and chief point thereof, is in the essentials and all weighty matters of Christian Faith and Life. The second and next in account is in the essentials and integrals of Church state, that is, in the Christian Church-Worship, Ministry and Discipline, considered as of Christs institution, and abstracted from all things superadded by men. The third and lowest point is in those extrinsecal and accidental Forms and Orders of Religion, which are necessary

in *genere*, but left in *specie* to human determination.

Of these several points of Unity, there is to be a different valuation according to their different value. Our first and chief regard is due to the first and chief point, which respects Christian Faith and Life; The next regard is due to that which is next in value, that which respects the very constitution or frame of a Church; And regard is to be had of that also which respects the accidentals of Religion, yet in its due place and not before things of greater weight and worth. Things are of a very different nature and importance to the Churches good Estate; and a greater or lesser stress must be laid upon Unity in them, as the things themselves are of greater or lesser moment.

The Rule or Law of Church Unity is not the will of man, but the will of God. Whosoever keeps that Unity which hath Gods word for its Rule, keeps the Unity of the Spirit; And whosoever boasts of a Unity that is not squared by this Rule, his boasting is but vain.

An Hypothesis that nothing in the Service of God is lawfull, but what is expressly prescribed in Scripture, is by some falsely ascribed to a sort of men who earnestly contend for the Scriptures sufficiency, and perfection for the regulating of Divine Worship, and

the whole state of Religion. God in his Word hath prescribed all those parts of his Worship, that are necessary to be performed to him. He hath likewise therein instituted those Officers that are to be the Administrators of his publick Worship in Church Assemblies, and hath defined the authority and duty of those Officers, and all the essentials and integrals of Church state. As for the circumstances and accidentals belonging to all the things aforesaid, he hath laid down general Rules for the regulation thereof, the particulars being both needless and impossible to be enumerated and defined.

In this point God hath declared his mind, *Deut. 4. 2.* Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it. *Deut. 12. 32.* What soever thing I command you, observe to do it, Thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it. The prohibition is not meerly of altering the Rule, Gods written Word by addition or diminution, but of doing more or less than the Rule required, as the precept is not of preserving the Rule, but of observing what is commanded in it.

Such human institutions in Divine Worship, as be in meer subserviency to Divine institutions, for the necessary and convenient modifying and ordering thereof, are not properly additions to Gods commandments. For  
they

they are of things which are not of the same nature, end and use with the things which God hath commanded, but of meer circumstantials and accidentals belonging to those things. And these circumstantials are in *genera* necessary to the performance of Divine Institutions, and are generally commanded in the Word, though not in particular, but are to be determined in *specie* by those to whom the power of such determination belongs.

They that assert and stand to this only Rule, provide best for the Unity of Religion, and the Peace of the Church. For they are ready to reject whatsoever they find contrary to this Rule, they are more easily kept within the bounds of acceptable Worship, and all warrantable obedience, they lay the greatest weight on things of the greatest worth and moment, they carefully regard all Divine institutions and whatsoever God hath commanded, and they maintain Love, and Peace, and mutual forbearance towards one another in the more inconsiderable diversities of Opinion and Practice.

Those things that are left to human determination, the Pastors, Bishops or Elders, did anciently determine for their own particular Churches. And indeed it is very reasonable and naturally convenient, that they who are the Administrators of Divine institutions, and have the conduct of the People in Divine Worship, and know best what is most expedient

(17)  
dient for their own Society, should be intrusted with the determination of necessary circumstances within their own Sphere. But forasmuch as the Supream Magistrate is intrusted of God with the care of Religion within his Dominions, and hath a Civil Supremacy in Ecclesiastical affairs, and a great concern in the orderly management of publick Assemblies, he is authorized of God to oversee the determinations and actings of Ecclesiastical Persons, and may assume to himself the determination of the aforesaid circumstantialia for the honour of God, the Churches edification, and the publick Peace, keeping within the general rules prescribed in Gods Word.

For the maintaining of Church-Unity, that is according to Gods word, it is the part of Subjects to submit to what their Governours have determined, so far as their submission is allowable by the said rule; and it is the part of Governours to consider well the warrantableness of their determinations. More especially their wisdom and care is much required in settling the right bounds of Unity. In this regard the terms of admission to the Communion and Ministry of the Church must be no other, than what the declared will of God hath made the terms of those privileges, and which will shut out none, whom God hath qualified for and called to the same. The setting of other boundaries, besides the

iniquity thereof, will inevitably cause divisions.

The Apostles, Elders and Brethren assembled at Jerusalem, *Acts 15. 28.* writing to the believing Gentiles declare, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.* From which it is evidently inferred that the burden of things unnecessary ought not to be laid on the Churches.

The things enjoined by that Assembly were antecedently to their Decree, either necessary in themselves or in their consequents according to the state of things in those times and places. And whatsoever is made the matter of a strict injunction, especially a condition of Church Communion and Priviledges, ought to have some kind of necessity in it antecedent to its imposition. Symbolical Rites or Ceremonies instituted by man to signify Grace or Duty, are none of those things, which being necessary in general, are left to human determination for this or that kind thereof. They have no necessary Subserviency to Divine institutions, they are no parts of that necessary decency and order in Divine Worship, without which the Service would be undecent. And indeed they are not necessary to be instituted or rigidly urged in any time or place whatsoever. The being and well being of any rightly constituted Church of Christ, may stand without them.

St. Paul

St. Paul resolves upon the cases of using or refusing of meats, and the observance or non-observance of days, which God had neither commanded nor forbidden, and of eating of those meats which had been offered in Sacrifice to Idols, *Rom. 14.* and *1 Cor. 8.* *That no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his Brothers way.* The Command here given, extends to Pastors and Governours as well as to other Christians, and is to be observed in acts of Governments as well as in other acts. St. Paul was a Church Governour and of high authority, yet he would not use his own liberty in eating Flesh, much less would he impose in things unnecessary to make his Brother to offend.

In the cases aforementioned, there was a greater appearance of reason for despising, censuring or offending others, than there can be for some impositions now in question among us, *viz.* on the one side a fear of partaking in Idolatry, or of eating meats that God had forbidden, or of neglecting days that God had commanded, as they thought; on the other side a fear of being driven from the Christian Liberty, and of restoring the Ceremonial Law. Nevertheless, the Apostle gives a severe charge against censuring, despising or offending others of different Persuasions in those cases. And if it were a Sin to censure or despise one another, much more is

it a Sin to shut out of the Communion or Ministry of the Church for such matters.

The word of God, which is the Rule of Church-Unity, evidently shews that the unity of external order must always be Subservient to Faith and Holiness, and may be required no further than is consistent with the Churches Peace and Edification.

The Churches true Interest lies in the increase of regenerate Christians, who are her true and living Members, and in their mutual love, peace and concord, in receiving one another upon those terms which Christ hath made the bond of this Union. The true Church Unity is comprized by the Apostle in these following Unities; One Body, one Spirit, one Hope, One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God. But there is nothing said of one ritual or set Form of Sacred Offices, one policy or model of Rules and Orders, that are but circumstantial and accidental in a Church state and very various and alterable, while the Church abides the same.

---

### C H A P. III.

#### *Of Schism truly so called.*

**H**ere I lay down general positions about Schism without making application thereof



thereof; Whether these positions be right or wrong Gods Word will shew; and who are, or are not concerned in them, the state of things will shew. Schism is a violation of the Unity of the Spirit, or of that Church-Unity which is of Gods making or approving. This Definition I ground on the aforecited Text, *Mark them that cause Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine that ye have learned.*

Separation and Schism are not of equal extent. There may be a Separation or Secession where there is no Schism. For Schism is always a Sin, but Separation may be a Duty, as the Separation of the Protestants from the Church of *Rome*. Moreover, there may be Schism where there is no Separation. The violation of Unity or the causing of Divisions may be not only by withdrawing, but by any causing of others to withdraw from the Communion of the Church, or by the undue casting or keeping of others out of the Church, or by making of any breaches in Religion contrary to the Unity of the Spirit.

By looking back to the nature, and rule, and requisites of true Church-Unity, we shall understand the true nature and the several kinds and degrees of Schism.

As holy love is the life and Soul of Church-Unity, so that averfaction and opposition which contrary to love, is that which animates

the fin of Schism, and is as it were the heart root of it. Whosoever maintains love, and makes no breach therein, and whose dissenting or withdrawing from a Church is no other than what may stand with love in its extent, is no Schismatick.

The Unity of the Spirit being primarily that of the Church as mystically, the breach thereof lies primarily in being destitute of the Spirit and Life Spiritual, much more in being opposite thereunto, under the shew of Christianity; also in the languishing or lessening of Spiritual Life, especially of the acts of holy love.

The Unity of the Spirit being secondarily, that of the Church as visible in its external state, and the first and chiefest point thereof being in the essentials and weighty matters of Christian Faith and Life; the highest violation thereof and the chiefest point of Schism lies in denying or enormously violating the said essentials or weighty matters. And it is directly a violation of the Unity of the Catholick Church, and not of particular Churches only.

Not only particular Persons, but Churches, yea a large combination of Churches bearing the Christian name, may in their Doctrine, Worship and other avowed Practice, greatly violate the essentials, or very weighty matters of Christian Faith and Life, and be found

guilty of the most enormous breach of Unity.

It is no Schism to withdraw or depart from any the largest combination or collective body of Churches, (though for their amplitude they presume to stile their combination the Catholick Church) that maintain and avow any Doctrine or Practice, which directly, or by near and palpable consequence overthrows the said essentials.

The next point of external Unity being about the essentials and integrals of Church state, the Sacraments and other publick Worship, the Ministry and Discipline of the Church considered as of Christs institution, the next chief point of Schism is the breach hereof. And this may be either against the Catholick, or a particular Church.

Of such Schism against the state of the Catholick Church, there are these instances.

1. When any one part of professed Christians how numerous soever, combined by any other terms of Catholick Unity, than what Christ hath made, account themselves the only Catholick Church, excluding all Persons and Churches that are not of their combination.

2. When a false Catholick Unity is devised or contended for, viz. a devised Unity of Government for the Catholick Church under one terrene Head, personal or collective, summing a proper governing power over all

Christians upon the face of the whole Earth.

3. When there is an utter disowning of most of the true visible Churches in the World, as having no true Church state, no not the essentials thereof, and an utter breaking off from communion with them accordingly.

Of Schism against a particular Church in point of its Church state, there be these instances.

1. The renouncing of a true Church as no Church, although it be much corrupted, much more if it be a purer Church, though somewhat faulty.

2. An utter refusing of all acts of communion with a true Church when we may have communion with it, either in whole or in part, without our personal sin of commission or omission.

3. The causing of any Divisions or Distempers in the state or frame of a true Church contrary to the Unity of the Spirit.

But it is no Schism to disown a corrupt frame of Polity, supervenient to the essentials and integrals of Church state in any particular Church or combination of Churches, like a leprosie in the Body, that doth grossly deprave them, and in great part frustrate the ends of their constitution.

The last and lowest point of external Unity lying in the accidental modes of Religion, and matters of meer order, extrinſick to the

( 25 )  
essentials and integrals of Church-State, the violation thereof is the least and lowest point of Schism, I mean in it self considered, and not in such aggravating circumstances as it may be in.

Those accidental Forms and Orders of Religion, which are necessary in *genere* but left in *specie* to human determination, are allowed of God, when they are determined according to prudence, and charity for Peace and Edification, and accordingly they are to be submitted to. Consequently it is one point of Schism to make a Division from or in a Church upon the account of accident Forms and Orders so determined according to Gods allowance.

But if any of the accidentals be unlawfull, and the maintaining or practicing thereof be imposed upon us as the terms of our communion, it is no Schism but Duty to abstain from communion in that case. For explicitly and personally to own errors and corruptions even in smaller points is evil in it self, which must not be committed that good may come. In this case not he that withdraws, but he that imposes causeth the Division. And this holds of things sinfull either in themselves, or by just consequence.

And herein he that is to act, is to discern and judge for his own practice, whether the things imposed be such. For Gods Law supposeth

us rational creatures able to discern its meaning, and to apply it for the regulating of our own actions; else the Law were given us in vain. Submission and reverence towards Superiors obligeth no man to resign his understanding to their determinations, or in compliance with them to violate his own conscience. Persons meek, humble, peaceable and thoroughly conscientious and of competent judgment, may not be able by their diligent and impartial search to see the lawfulness of things enjoined, and tis a hard case if they should thereupon be declared contumacious.

Seeing there be several points of Unity, the valuation whereof is to be made according to their different value, mens judgment and estimation of Unity and Schism, is very preposterous, who lay the greatest stress on those points that are of least moment, and raise things of the lowest rank to the highest in their valuation, and set light by things of the greatest moment and highest value; as indeed they do, who set light by soundness of Faith and holiness of Life, and conscientious observance of Divine institutions, where there is not also unanimity and uniformity in unscriptural Doctrines and human ceremonies. And they that make such an estimate of things, and deal with Ministers accordingly, do therein little advance the Unity of the Spirit, or endeavour to keep it in the bond of Peace.

Seeing the word of God is the rule of Church Unity, a breach is made upon it, when other bounds thereof are set than this rule allows. An instance hereof is the devising of other terms of Church-communion, and Ministerial liberty, than God hath commanded, or allowed in his Word to be made the terms thereof; Also any casting or keeping out of the Church or Ministry such as Gods Word doth not exclude from either, but signifies to be qualified and called thereunto.

God doth not allow on the part of the Imposer such tearms of Church communion or Ministerial station, as are neither Scriptural nor necessary to Peace and Edification, nor are any part of that necessary order and decency, without which the Service of God would be undecent, nor are in any regard so necessary, but that they may be dispensed with for a greater benefit, and the avoiding of a greater mischief. And they are found guilty of Schism that urge such unscriptural and unnecessary things unto a breach in the Church. Such Imposers are not only an occasion of the breach that follows, but a culpable cause thereof, because they impose without and against Christs warrant, who will not have his Church to be burdened, nor the consciences of his Servants entangled with things unnecessary.

Nevertheless, such unscriptural or unnecessary things, if they be not in themselves

unlawfull nor of mischievous consequence may be of Gods allowing as to the submitters. Thereupon they are guilty of Schism, who meerly for the sake of those unnecessary things yet lawfull as to their use, though wrongfully urged upon them, forsake the communion of the Church or their Ministerial station, where things are well settled as to the substantials of Religion, and the ends of Church order, and when they themselves are not required to justify the imposing of such unnecessaries. Here I speak of contumacious refusers, who will rather make a breach than yield. But refusers out of conscience believing, or with appearance of reason suspecting the said lawfull things to be unlawfull, are either acquitted from Schism, or guilty but in a low degree, and much less culpable than the Imposers, who might well forbear to impose.

Be it here noted that when Superiors sin in commanding a thing exempt from their authority, it may be the Subjects duty to observe the thing commanded. In this case the said observance is not an act of obedience, for that can arise only from the Rulers authority to command. But it is an act of prudence, equity and charity, and it is good and necessary for the ends sake, and in that regard tis an act of obedience, though not to the Earthly Ruler, yet to God who commands us to follow Peace and maintain Unity in all lawful ways and means.



(27)  
In the judgment of the Apostle it is no slight matter to act against conscience rationally doubting, or suspecting a breach of Gods Law, *Rom. 14. 5. Let every man be fully persuaded in his mind, v. 14. To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean, ver. 23. He that doubteth, is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith, for whatsoever is not of Faith is sin.* The command of Rulers is no good security for acting against a rational doubting conscience. When I am in doubt touching the lawfulness of the thing enjoined, I have no certainty of being on the safer side, by complying with Rulers. For though in general obedience to Rulers be a certain Duty, yet in the particular doubted case, I cannot be certain that my compliance is right and warrantable obedience, and not a breach of Gods Law. Is it plain that I ought to obey the commands of Rulers in things that have Gods allowance? so tis as plain that I ought not to obey their commands in things which God hath forbidden. Moreover, it is as plain that I ought not to act against my own conscience, which as being the discerners of the will of God concerning me, is of right the immediate director of my actions. Indeed my conscience cannot alter Gods Law, or make that which God hath made my duty to be not my

my duty, yet it will not suffer me to act in dif-  
conformity to its directions.

Seeing the Unity of the Spirit is always in  
conjunction with Faith and Holiness, to which  
the Unity of external order is always to be  
subservient, it follows that when Unity of ex-  
ternal order doth not tend to advance but  
hinder sound Faith and true Holiness, then a  
false Unity is set up, and the true Unity is a-  
bandoned, and divisions and offences are  
caused. And it is no Schism but a duty not  
to adhere to a Unity of external order so set  
and urged, as that it tends to the destruction  
or notable detriment of Faith and Holiness,  
which are the end of all Church Order. The  
means are good in reference to their end, and  
must never be used in a way destructive to  
it. Of the hinderance of the said ends, there  
be these following instances.

Here laid down in general, without intend-  
ment of particular application to any Churches  
now in being, which are left to be tryed and  
judged by that rule by which all must stand  
or fall.

1. When a Church or Churches, a Con-  
gregation or Congregations have an establish-  
ment of external Polity, and an ordained Mi-  
nistry, and a Form of Divine Worship, but  
are destitute of such Ministers as are qualified  
to feed the Flock, and are burdened with such

as are altogether unfit to have the charge of Souls committed to them, who are either unable to teach, or teach corruptly, either teaching corrupt Doctrine, or abusing, mishandling and misapplying sound Doctrine, to encourage the Ungodly and discourage the Godly.

2. Where there are some Ministers able and apt to teach and duly qualified; but their number is in no wise proportionable to the number of the People, and there be multitudes that cannot have the benefit of their Ministry, so that if they have no more placed among them than those few, they have in effect none.

3. Where sincere Christians, or credible Professors of Christianity are cast out of an established Church by wrong sentence, or are debarred from its communion by unlawfull terms enjoyned them, or unnecessary terms which are to them unlawfull by real doubts of conscience, and which Christ hath not authorized Rulers to enjoyn as terms of Church communion.

4. When Ministers, whom Christ hath furnished and called, are driven out of their publick station by unlawfull terms enjoyned, or by terms unnecessary and so them unlawfull by real doubts of conscience, and which Christ hath not authorized Rulers to enjoyn as terms of the publick Ministry.

Upon

Upon the cases here mentioned, I inquire whether the said Ministers and People may not draw together into new congregations. Let it be considered whether the determinations of men may be a perpetual bar to true visible Christians, (it may be to multitudes of them) against the enjoyment of those most important priviledges, to which God hath given them right. Yea, suppose their consciences were culpably weak in scrupling things imposed, yet they may suffer wrong by such an excess of punishment, as so great a deprivation. And Christ doth not reject them for such weaknesses.

Let it be also considered, whether such injured as Christians are wrongfully excluded from Gods Ordinances, and such neglected Souls as are left destitute of the necessary means of Salvation, may lawfully be deserted by Christs Ministers. Should not the Stewards of the mysteries of God endeavour to supply what is lacking to such by reason of the rigourousness or negligence of others? If it be said, we may not do evil that good may come, nor break the laws of Unity for such respects, the answer is, that this is not to do evil, but a good work and a necessary duty, and here is no breach of Unity that is of Gods making or allowing. The necessary means of saving Souls are incomparably more pretious than unifor-

uniformity in external, accidental order, especially when tis unwarrantably injoynd, and attended with such evil consequents. If within any local bounds assigned for the Pastoral charge of any Ecclesiastick, the People be left destitute of competent provision for their Souls, it is no intrusion or breach of Unity. If an other Pastor perform the work of the Ministry within those bounds.

Subjects may not by coercive power reform the publick State and change the Laws, which is the work of the Supream Magistrate. But let it be considered whether they may not have their voluntary Assemblies for Gods Worship, when they are driven from the communion of the legal Churches by the imposition of unlawfull terms, or unnecessary terms apprehended by them to be unlawfull. For in this case they are forced either to hold such Assemblies, or to abide perpetually without those spiritual priviledges which are their due, and the ordinary means of their Salvation.

There is a great difference between inimizial Separation, like Sedition in a Commonwealth, and Segregation upon necessary causes without breach of charity. And among the necessary causes this may be one, that all sober Christians, who for conscience sake cannot submit to the way of the Established Churches, may be relieved; and that none may be ex-

D

posed

posed for lack\* of that relief to be lead aside into the error of the wicked, as Heresie, Infidelity, or any other course of Impiety. Indeed here is some variation from the ordinarily regular bounding of Churches. But the partition of one Church from another by local bounds, is not of absolute necessity and invariable, but naturally eligible from the convenience thereof, when it may be had. But the state of some Christians may be such, as to compel them to vary from it. The scope hereof is not to set up Churches against Churches, but either occasional and temporary Assemblies, or at the most but diverse Churches distinguished by their several places of assembling, or by diversity of external order, as the allowed Congregations of Foreigners in *London*, are distinguished from the *Parish Churches*.

If any object the inconveniencies that may follow the permitting of Church Assemblies besides those of the Established Order, the answer is, That the wisdom and clemency of Rulers in any Nation where this case may be supposed can provide, that as few as may should stand in need of that permission, fixing the terms of Church communion at Ministerial liberty to such a latitude, as may comprehend all the more moderate Dissent. And after such comprehension, Christian

ity will plead, that all tolerable Dissenters (that is, all who believe and live as Christians) may be tolerated within such limits, as may stand with publick Peace and safety. That which is here proposed, may make for the relief of many thousand serious Christians without breach of the external order, which is necessary to be maintained, and is not set up to the hinderance of things more necessary.

It is to be noted that the offenders expressly marked out by the Apostle in the Text, *Rom. 16. 17.* were ungodly men that opposed or perverted the Christian Doctrine, and being Sensualists and deceivers disturbed and polluted the Christian Societies, and seduced the simple into destructive error and practice. Wherefore the Text is ill applied to the rigorous condemnation of honest and peaceable men, that dissent only in some accidental or inferior points of Religion, for which the Apostle forbids Christians to despise or judge one another. Yet not only false Teachers, but all schismatics are here condemned under this description, *viz.* those that cause Divisions and offences. And though they be not direct opposers of sound Doctrine, yet being Dividers and Disturbers, they practice contrary to the doctrine of Christ, which teacheth Unity, love and Peace. But still it must be observed that the reality of Schism lies not in being di-

vided or disordered, but in causing the division or disturbance, or in a voluntary violation of or departing from true Church-Unity.

They that cause Divisions are not excused from Schism by the support of Secular Power, nor are others convicted of it meerly by the want of that Support. The Magistrates power in Sacred things is accumulative, not destructive or diminutive to the rights of Christs Ministers and People. It takes not from them any thing that Christ hath granted them, but gives them a better capacity to make use thereof.

## C H A P. IV.

*Of the Schisms that were in the more ancient times of the Church; and the different case of the Nonconformists in these times.*

**O**F those parties which were anciently reputed Schismatics, as violating the Unity of the Church, yet not Hereticks, as denying any Fundamental point of the Christian Faith, the *Novatians* and *Donatists* are the chiefeft note. Forasmuch as both these are looked upon as the greatest instances of Schism, it may be requisite for me to consider



the true state of their separation from the main body of the Christian Church, passing by accidental matters, and insisting on the merits of their cause according to their main Principles and Practices.

As concerning the Donatists, the breach made by them had this rise. *Donatus* with his Complices vehemently opposed *Cecilianus*, who had been chosen Bishop of *Carthage*, in design to thrust him out of his Bishoprick. They accuse him of being ordained by one that had been a Proditor, and of having admitted into Ecclesiastical Office one that was guilty of the like fault. This Cause was by the Emperor *Constantine's* appointment heard before several Councils and many Judges. The Accusers still fail in their Proofs of the things objected, *Cecilianus* is acquitted and confirmed in his Office. The Party of *Donatus* failing in their design, were carried in a boundless rage of opposition to a total, and irreclaimable Separation from all the Churches that were not of their Faction, and became very numerous upon a pretence of shunning the contagion of the wicked in the Communion of the Sacraments. Their principles were, that the Church of Christ was no where to be found but among themselves in a corner of *Africa*; also that true Baptism was not Administred but in their Sect. Likewise they

proceeded to great tumult, and violence, and rapine. And a sort of them called *Circumcelliones* gloried in a furious kind of Martyrdom, partly by forcing others to kill them, and partly by killing themselves.

The *Novatians* took their name and beginning from *Novatus* a Presbyter, first at *Carthage*, afterwards at *Rome*, who held that they who lapsed in times of Persecution unto the denying of Christ, were not to be readmitted unto the Communion of the Church, though they repented and submitted to the Ecclesiastical Discipline of Penance. He separated from the *Roman* Church, and was made a Bishop by Bishops of his own judgment, in opposition to *Cornelius* Bishop of *Rome*. *Cyprian* gives a very bad character of him, as a turbulent, arrogant and avaritious Person. But of what Spirit soever he was, his Judgment and Canon was received among many that were of stricter lives; and he himself is reported to have suffered death in the persecution under *Valerian*.

At the Council of *Nice*, *Acecius* Bishop of the *Novatians* being asked by *Constantine* whether he assented to the same Faith with the Council, and to the observation of *Easter* as was there decreed, answered that he fully assented to both. Then being again asked by the Emperor, why he separated from the

Communion

Communion, he recited for himself things done in the Reign of *Decius*, and the exquisite observation of a certain severe Canon, that they who after Baptism had fallen into that kind of sin, which the Scripture calls a sin unto death, ought not to be partakers of the Divine mysteries; but to be exhorted to repentance, and to expect the hope of remission not from the Priest but from God, who hath power to forgive. By this it appears that the *Novatians* did not deny the Salvability of the lapsed, or others that had fallen into a sin unto death, but only refused to admit them to Sacerdotal Absolution and Church-Communion. And thus they made a very unwarrantable separation, grounded upon an unjust rigor of very bad consequence.

Nevertheless their error was no other, than what holy and good men might be ensnared in by the appearance of a greater detestation of sin, and its tendency to prevent the lapse of Christians into Idolatry, and to make them more resolved for Martyrdom. And by as credible History as any we have of the ancient times, they are reported to have had among them men eminently Pious, and some famous for Miracles. They unmovably adhered to the *Homousian* Faith, and for the maintenance of it together with the Orthodox, suffered dreadfull Persecutions. They had

some Bishops remarkable for Wisdom and  
 Godliness, and such as were consulted with by  
 some of the chief of the Catholick Bishops,  
 and that with good success for support of the  
 Common Faith against the *Arrians* and such  
 like Hereticks. Under a certain Persecution  
 wherein they were Companions of the self  
 same suffering, it is said that the *Catholicks*  
 and *Novatians* had Prayers together in the  
*Novations* Churches, and that in those times  
 they were almost united, if the *Novations*  
 had not utterly refused that they might keep  
 up their old institutes; yet they bare such  
 good will one to another, that they would die  
 one for another. These and many other things  
 of like nature are reported of them by *Socrates*,  
 whom some indeed suspect to have been addicted  
 to them, yet upon no other ground, but because  
 he gives them their due upon evident proof.  
 And besides what he hath reported, *Sosomen*  
 thus testifies of them, L. 2. C. 30. *That*  
*when other Sects expired, the Novatians be-*  
*cause they had good men for the Leaders of*  
*their way, and because they defended the same*  
*Doctrine with the Catholick Church, were*  
*very numerous from the beginning, and so*  
*continued, and suffered not much damage*  
*by Constantines Law for suppressing of Sects.*  
 And *Acesius* their Bishop being much favoured  
 by the Emperor, for the integrity of his life  
 greatly

greatly advantaged his Church. Also L. 4.  
C. 19. He reports the great amity that was  
between them and the Catholicks in a time  
of common Persecution.

Whether the case of the Dissenters from the  
Uniformity now required, be in point of  
Schism of the same or like reason with the  
above mentioned, or any other anciently re-  
puted Schismaticks, is now to be considered.  
And it is the case of those that dissent not in  
the substance of Religion, but only in things  
pertaining to the Ecclesiastical Polity or external  
Order in the Church, that is here taken  
into consideration. Of these, some being per-  
suaded of the necessity of their own Church-  
Order, desire to remain as they are in their  
severed Societies; yet they do not nullify  
the legal Churches or Ministry, or the dis-  
pensation of the Word, Sacraments and Pray-  
er therein performed. Others being satisfied  
in the constitution of Parochial Churches, and  
in the substance of the Established Form of  
Worship, would gladly embrace a freedom  
of Communicating and Administring there-  
in, upon the removal of some bars that lie  
against them, and which they think may  
well be removed. Thereupon they seek  
an Accommodation and Union by a sufficient  
comprehensiveness in the publick constitution;  
and withall a reasonable indulgence towards  
those

those Brethren, who for the straightness of their judgments cannot be comprehended.

Neither Party of the Dissenters here described can be charged with any thing like the *Donatistical* fury before expressed. If *Austin* sought the suppression of that Sect by the secular power, in regard of the horrible outrages committed by them, it cannot reasonably be urged for a precedent (as it hath been by some) for the suppression of men Sober and Peaceable, and sound in the main points of Christian Faith and Life. Nor can either Party of us be charged with that intolerable presumption and arrogance of the Donatists, in confining the Flock of Christ to their own Party, or the disannulling and utter denouncing of all Churches besides their own. Nor is the ground of our dissatisfaction like theirs, which began in a quarrel against a particular Bishop, and was maintained by animosity against those that would not condemn him. It is well known that another manner of account is to be given of our Dissents.

If it be objected, that those Dissenters whose principles bind them up to persevere in their severed Societies, seem in this respect to be as the *Novatians*, who would not admit a re-Union with the other Churches; it may be answered for them, that reasons have

have been offered in the foregoing parts of this Discourse for indulgence to conscientious People, who are intangled by the narrowness of their principles touching Church-Order. Besides, they do not stand off upon so harsh and rigorous a point as the *Novatians* did, *viz.* The utter repelling of the lapsed, though penitent from the Communion of the Church. And they have ordinarily communion in the Word and Prayer with Congregations that are not of their Church way, and occasionally in the Sacrament with those Congregations, where they apprehend a care of the exercise of Discipline. Nor may they be judged so irreconcilable to the Established Order, but that the holy lives of those in the publick Ministry, and their lively Preaching, and a greater care of true and real Church-Discipline, might do much to their recovery.

In the mean time, why may not these be upon as good terms under the present Government, as the *Novatians* were under the Government of their times? Church History reports that they were cruelly Persecuted by the *Arrian* Emperours and Bishops, and that they had great indulgence under Orthodox Emperours, and with many Catholick Bishops and Patriarchs, whose prudent and moderate Government did best provide for the

the Peace of their Churches. But those Orthodox Bishops, who took from them their Churches and Estates, were chiefly either such as took to themselves a Secular Power, and ruled imperiously and with violence, or such as with their zeal had more of wrath and rashness than of meekness and prudence. This can be easily proved in the particular instances, if need were.

But this is not the case of all *Nonconformists*. For part of them (and upon good experiment made, they may be found the greater part) do not seek to abide in a severed State, but desire a Union. It is well known they are as sensible of the evil of Schism, and as Studious of the Churches Peace and Concord, as any others. And though they have not the same latitude of judgment with others in some points, yet they have a right Catholick Spirit to promote the common Interest of Religion, and more especially the Protestant Reformation, and dread the weakning and shattering of it by needless Divisions, and are ready to go as far as conscience will allow in compliance with the injunctions of Rulers. But they are cast and kept out of the Established Order by the injunction of some terms, which in regard of their present judgment, they cannot comply with, but under the guilt of so great



great a sin as dissembling in the matter of Religion.

Touching Church-Government, they admit the Episcopacy that was of ancient Ecclesiastical custom in the time of *Ignatius*, yea, or of *Cyprian*. Bishop *Usher's* model of Government by Bishops and Arch-bishops with their Presbyters, was by some of them presented to the Kings Majesty for a ground-work of Accommodation. They acknowledge the Kings Ecclesiastical Supremacy according to the Oath in that case required. His Majesty in his gracious Declaration concerning Ecclesiastical Affairs, gives a Testimony concerning the Ministers that attended him in *Holland*, in these words, *viz. To our great satisfaction and comfort, We found them Persons full of affection to Us, and of zeal to the Peace of Church and State, and neither Enemies (as they had been given out to be) to Episcopacy or Liturgy, but modestly to desire such alterations in either, as without shaking foundations might best allay the present Distempers.*

They are ready to engage that they will not disturb the Peace of the Church, nor endeavour any point of alteration in its Government by Rebellious Seditions, or any unlawfull ways. Those points of Conformity wherein they are dissatisfied, are but some accidentals of Religion and external modes,

modes, and the Declarations and Subscriptions importing an allowance of all and every thing contained in the Liturgy. And they think that these points are not so necessary in themselves or in their consequents, but they are very dispensable as the Wisdom of Governours shall see cause.

If it be objected, that if any thing should be yielded to them, there would be no end of their cravings, that which I have to say is, That reasonable men will be satisfied with reasonable concessions ; and if Subjects know not what is fit for them to ask, Governours know what is fit for them to give. By granting the desired relaxation, the Church would not ( as some alledge ) be self-condemned, as confessing the unlawfulness of her injunctions, or as justifying the Opinions of the Dissenters. For it can signifie from her no more than either her indulgence to the weak, or her moderation in things less necessary and more controverted, which would not turn to her reproach, but to her greater justification.

I have here nothing to say to them that object against any relaxation after that manner, as if they desired not our Conformity but our perpetual exclusion. Such may be answered in due season. And I have here nothing to do with those that argue against

is from Politick considerations, respecting a particular Interest too narrow for an adequate foundation of Church-Peace and Christian-Concord. But my scope is to consider what may be done by the Higher Powers and Church Guides for the healing of breaches, according to the Wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easie to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisie.

I have made particular observation of those too most remarkable Parties, which have been looked upon as the chief instances of Schism in the more ancient times. The other Schisms that I find of any remark in those times were raised, sometimes by Persons cast out of the Church for their Crimes, and thereupon drawing Disciples after them, as was that of *Meletius* a Bishop in *Egypt*, who was desposed for having sacrificed to Idols. Sometimes by offence unjustly taken at some supposed faultiness in a Bishop, as was that of an Orthodox Party in *Antioch*, against another *Meletius*, an Orthodox and right worthy Bishop of that City, only because he was at first brought in by the *Arrians*; sometimes by the exasperations of the People for injuries done

to

to them or their Pastors, and outrages committed by their opposites, as was that of the *Johannites* at *Constantinople* upon the banishment of *Chrysostom*; and sometimes by mere animosity and humor of discontentment, as was that of *Lucifer* a Bishop in *Sardinia* who separated from *Eusebius* Bishop of *Vercellis* and others, because they disliked his rash act of Ordaining *Paulinus* to be Bishop of *Antioch*, as tending to perpetuate the Schism there begun.

Touching all the said Parties, it may be observed that they did not plead that any Opinions or Forms were imposed on them to which their consciences did reluctate, nor did they desire others forbearance toward them in such things as might bear too hard upon them; but they themselves would not bear with others in that which they supposed faulty, but did rather choose wholly to abandon the Communion of the Churches and did not seek nor care for accomodation with them. But this is not the case of at least a great part of the Dissenters of these times. For they importune an accomodation with the Churches of the Established Order and for Peace sake, are willing to bear with the practice of others in that which themselves dislike or doubt of; but they cannot obtain

obtain a Dispensation from others, in some things which are very dispensable points according to their judgment, but are forced to abide in a severed state, unless they will profess what they believe not, or practice what they allow not.

Now because the judgment and practice of antiquity is much insisted on, I pray that it may be considered, whether in the Primitive, or ancient times of Christianity, men, yea, many hundreds of men duly qualified for the Ministry by sound Faith and good Life, as also by their Learning and Industry, and offering all reasonable security for their submissive and peaceable demeanour, were or would have been cast and kept out of the Church for their Nonconformity to some Opinions, Forms and Ceremonies, which at the best are but the accidentals of Religion, and of the truth or lawfulness whereof, the Dissenters were wholly dissatisfied, and which the Imposers judged to be but things in themselves indifferent.

And I further pray that it may be considered, whether it be easier for the Nonconformists to be self-condemned in Conforming to some injunctions against their consciences, and in deserting the Ministry to

E

which

which they are dedicated, than for Superiours either by some relaxation to make them capable of Conforming, or to bear with their peaceable exercise of the Ministry in a state of Nonconformity, while some of their injunctions confine them to that state.

---

CHAP.

---

## C H A P. V.

*Of making a right estimate of the guilt of Sabism, and something more of taking the right way to Unity.*

**T**He confused noise about Schism, and the unjust imputation thereof, that is commonly made, hath greatly disordered the minds of many. Some have been thereby swaid to an absolute compliance with the most numerous or the most prevailling Parties. Others discerning the abuse of this name, but forgetting that there is something truly so called, have made light of the thing it self, which is indeed of a heinous nature. I have been engaged in this Disquisition by a deep sense of the evil of Schism, and an earnest care of keeping my self from the real guilt thereof, and what is here written, I willingly submit to a grave and just examination. *Errare possum, Hæreticus, Schismaticus esse nolo.* I am liable to Errour as others are, but I am sure I am no wilfull Schismatick.

It is commonly given to men to pass a

severe judgment upon every dissent from their own Opinions and Orders. Whereupon, as that hath had the character of Schism stamped upon it, which is not such indeed; so that which is Schism in a low and tolerable degree, hath been aggravated to the highest, and prosecuted against all rules of prudence and charity.

To make an equal judgment of the guilt of Schism in Persons or Parties, the degree of the Schism is duly to be considered. Our Saviour teacheth that reviling language, contemptuous words and rash anger, are breaches of the Sixth Commandment, yet in degree of guilt, they are vastly different from the act of wilfull Murther. And indeed in the kind of delinquency here treated of, there are as great differences of degrees as of any other kind. The case of those that are necessitated to a non-compliance in some lawfull things by them held unlawfull, yet seeking union would gladly embrace a reasonable accomodation, is much different from theirs, who upon choice and wilfully sever themselves, because they love to be severed. In like manner the case of those who desire and seek the conformity of others, and would gladly have fellowship with them, yet through misguided zeal, are approvers of such unnecessa-  
ry



from ry impositions as hinder the conforming of many, is much different from theirs, who designing the extrusion of others, contrive the intangling of them by needless rigors. Many other instances might be given to express the great disparity of cases in point of Schism, all which may teach us in the estimate that we are to make thereof, to put a difference between honest minds, that by mistake are drawn into Division, and those that out of their corrupt minds and evil designs do wilfully cause Division.

In many things we offend all, and therefore it behoves us to consider one another, as subject to the like errors and passions. We should not judge too severely, as we would not be so judged. There be many examples of Schismatical animosities and perversenesses, into which in the ancient times such Persons have fallen, as were otherwise worthily esteemed in the Church. *Cyril* with the greater number of Bishops in the *Ephesine* Council, too rashly deposed *John* of *Antioch*, and his Party of Bishops upon a quarrel that arose between them. And *John* with his Adherents returning to *Antioch*, did more rashly depose *Cyril* and his Party, and yet both Parties were Orthodox, and in the issue joyned in the Condemnation of *Nestorius*.

*storian*. But the most remarkable instance in this kind, is the disorderly and injurious proceeding of so venerable a Person as *Epiphanius*, against so worthy a Person as *Chrysostom*, to which he was stirred up by the instigation of that incendiary *Theophilus* of *Alexandria*. The said *Epiphanius* goes to *Constantinople*, and in the Church without the City held a sacred Communion, and Ordained a Deacon; and when he had entred the City, in a publick Church he read the Decree made by himself and some others in the condemnation of *Origens* Books, and excommunicated *Dioscurus* and his Brethren called the long Monks, worthy and Orthodox men persecuted by the *Anthromorphites*. And all this he did without and against the consent of *Chrysostom* the Bishop of the Place, and in contempt of him. I may further instance in the long continued division between *Paulinus* and *Meletius*, with their Parties at *Antioch*, though both of them were of the *Nicene* Faith; likewise in the long continued Separation made from the Church of *Constantinople*, by the followers of *Chrysostom* after his banishment, because they were exasperated by the injuries done to their worthy Patriarch.

These weaknesses in good men of old times, I observe not to dishonour them, but that

that we may be thereby warned to be more  
charitable and less censorious towards one ano-  
ther, in case of the like weaknesles and dis-  
orders, and to be solicitous to maintain Peace,  
and to prevent discord among all those that  
are united in the substantials of Christian  
Faith and Practice, and for this end to be  
more carefull in avoiding unreasonable op-  
positions, unwarrantable impositions, and all  
causeless exasperations.

True Holiness is the basis of true Unity.  
For by it the Faithfull cleave to God, and one  
to another in him and for him, and are in-  
clined to receive one another on those terms,  
on which God hath received them all. And  
by it they are turned from that dividing  
selfishness, which draws men into several or  
opposite ways according to their several or  
opposite ends.

Let not a carnal wordly Interest in a Church  
state, be set up against Holiness and Unity.  
Let the increase and peace of the Church  
visible, be sought in order to the increase and  
peace of the mystical. Let no one Party be  
lifted up against the common Peace of sound  
Believers; and let not any part of the legi-  
timate Children of Christs Family be ejected  
or harassed upon the instigation of others,  
but let the Stewards in the Family carry it  
equally, and so gratifie one part in their

desired Orders, that the other part be not oppressed. Let not them be still vexed, who would be glad of tolerable terms with their Brethren. In Church-Governours let the power of doing good be enlarged, and the power of doing hurt restrained, as much as will stand with the necessary ends of Government.

Let the Discipline of the Church commend it self to the consciences of men. Let the edge of it be turned the right way and its vigor be put forth, not about little formalities but the great and weighty matters of Religion. Zeal in substantials and charitable forbearance in circumstantial, is the way to gain upon the hearts of those that understand the true ends of Church-government, and what it is to be Religious indeed.

Let the occasions of stumbling and snares of division be taken out of the way, and let controverted unnecessaries be left at liberty. Discord will be inevitable, where the terms of concord remain a difficulty insuperable. The Conscientious that are willing to bid high for Peace, cannot resign their consciences to the wills of men, and humility and soberness doth not oblige them to act contrary to their own judgments out of reverence to their Superiors; they cannot help themselves, but their Superiors may. 'Tis the Spirit of Antichrist that is fierce and violent; but the Spirit

op- Spirit of Christ is dovelike, meek and harm-  
 who less, and that Spirit inclines to deal tenderly  
 their with the consciences of Inferiours. Tender-  
 wer ness of conscience is not to be despised or  
 r of exposed to scorn, because some may falsely pre-  
 and tend to it. The Head of the Church and  
 Saviour of the Body is compassionate towards  
 end his Members, and he hath said, *Whofo shall offend*  
 the *one of these little ones, that believe in me, it*  
 its *were better for him that a milstone were hang-*  
 ali- *ed about his neck, and that he were drowned*  
 of *in the depth of the Sea.*

ble As the way of unity lies much in the wis-  
 to dom, equity and charity of Superiours, so in  
 der- the humility and due submission of Inferiours,  
 nt, in their ready closing with what is commend-  
 able in the publick constitutions, in their  
 res bearing with what is tolerable, in making  
 let the best improvement of what is therein im-  
 ty. provable for their own and others Edification,  
 ms in a word, in denying no compliance, which  
 le. piety towards God and charity towards men  
 bid doth not forbid.

en- Matters of publick injunction, which In-  
 so- feriors stick at, may be considered by them  
 ry either as in themselves unlawfull, or as inex-  
 to pedient. Now it is not only or chiefly the  
 es, inexpediency of things commanded, but the  
 of supposed unlawfulness of divers of those  
 be things that the Nonconformists generally stick  
 rit at,

at, whereof they are ready to render a particular account, when it will be admitted. Howbeit a question may arise about the warrantableness of submission to things not in themselves unlawfull but inexpedient, especially in respect of scandal, the solution whereof may be requisite for the clearing of our way in such things.

Upon this question it may be noted, That in those cases, wherein there is no right of commanding, there is no due of obedience. Nevertheless, things unwarrantably commanded are sometimes warrantably observed, though not in obedience, yet in prudence, as to procure Peace, and to shew a readiness to all possible compliance with Superiors. Moreover, Rulers have no authority to command that, which in it self is not unlawfull, when Christian charity forbids to do it in the present circumstances by reason of evil consequents. For all authority is given for Edification and not for Destruction. Likewise our Christian liberty includes no Licence to do that act at the command of Rulers, the doing of which in regard of circumstances, is uncharitable. But here it must be considered, how far the law of charity doth extend in this case, and when it doth, or doth not forbid my observance of what the Ruler hath unwarrantably, because uncharitably commanded.

True

True charity doth not wholly destroy Christian Liberty, though it regulates the use thereof; and it doth not extend it so far one way as to destroy it self another way. If I am bound up from doing every indifferent thing, at which weak consciences will take offence, my liberty is turned into bondage, and I am left in thralldom to other mens endless Scrupulosities. This is I think a yoke which Christians are not fit nor able to bear. This bondage is greater and the burden lies heavier upon me, if by reason of others weakness, I must be bound up from observing an indifferent thing at the command of Rulers, and by them made the condition of my liberty for publick Service in the Church, when my conscience is fully satisfied that it is lawfull, and otherwise expedient for me to do it. As for the warrantableness of enjoyning, the Ruler must look to that. Are some displeased and grieved that I do it? As many or more may be displeased and grieved if I do it not. Do some take occasion by my necessary use of a just liberty, to embolden themselves to sin? My forbearing of it may be an occasion of sin to others, as their persisting in some troublesom Error to their own and others Spiritual damage, and in unwarrantable non-compliance with their Governours. And the loss of my liberty for publick Service consequent to such forbearance, must also be laid in the ballance.

When

When both the using and forbearing of my liberty is clogged with evil consequents, I know no safer way than duly to consider of what moment the consequents are on either side, and to incline to that which hath the lesser evil. Here in the Wisdom of the prudent is to direct his way upon the impartial view of all circumstances which come under his prospect. And if good conscience and right reason, guided by the general Rules of Gods Word, lead me to make use of my Christian liberty in compliance with my Superiors, I must humbly and charitably apply myself to remove the offence, that some take by clearing the lawfulness and expediency of my act to their judgments. But if that cannot be discerned by them, I am by my Christian good behaviour to make it evident to their consciences, what in me lies, that what I do, do sincerely and faithfully, and that I am not a temporizer, man-pleaser and self-seeker. I humbly conceive that that high saying of the Apostle, *If meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no Flesh while the World standeth* doth admit such equitable interpretation, as the circumstances of time, place, person, and the whole state of things declares to be most reasonable.



*A humble representation of my own case touching the exercise of the Ministry.*

I Have been in the Ministry near fourty years, having been ordained Presbyter according to the Form of Ordination used in the Church of *England*. And being called to this Sacred Order, I hold my self indispensibly obliged to the work thereof, as God enables me and gives me opportunity. The nature of the Office is signified in the Form of Words, by which I was solemnly set apart thereunto. *viz. [Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained: And be thou a faithfull Dispenser of the Word of God and of his holy Sacraments, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.]* The former part of these Words being used by our Saviour to his Apostles, in conferring upon them the Pastoral Authority, fully proves that the Office of a Presbyter is Pastoral, and of the same nature with that which was ordinary in the Apostles, and in which they had Successours.

Like-

Likewise, this Church did then appoint that at the ordering of Priests or Presbyters certain portions of Scripture should be read as belonging to their Office to instruct them in the nature of it, viz. That portion of *Act. 20.* which relates *St. Pauls* sending to *Ephesus*, and calling for the Elders of the Congregation with his exhortation to them *To take heed to themselves and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers, to rule the Congregation of God.* Or else *1 Tim. 3.* which sets forth the Office and due qualification of a Bishop. And afterwards the Bishop spake to them that were to receive the Office of Priesthood, in this form of words, (*Ye have heard, brethren, as well in your private examination, and in the exhortation and holy Lessons taken out of the Gospels and Writings of the Apostles, of what dignity, and how great importance this Office is whereto ye are called, that is to say the Messengers, the Watchmen, the PASTORS and Stewards of the Lord, to teach, to premonish, to feed, to provide for the Lords Family.*

I mention my Ordination according to the Episcopal Form, because it is of greatest esteem with them, to whom this Representation is more especially tendred. Nevertheless, I own the validity of Presbyterian Ordination, and judge that Ministers so Ordained, may

may make the same defence for exercising the Ministry, in the same case that is here represented.

Christ is the Author and the only proper Giver of this Office; and though he give it by the mediation of men, yet not by them as giving the Office, but as instruments of the designation, or of the solemn investiture of the Person to whom he gives it. As the King is the immediate Giver of the power of a Mayor in a Town Corporate, when he gives it by the Mediation of Electors and certain Officers, only as instruments of the designation, or of the solemn investiture of the Person.

I am not conscious of disabling my self to the Sacred Ministrations, that belong to the Office of a Presbyter, by any Opinion or Practice, that may render me unfit for the same. Touching which matter, I humbly offer my self to the tryal of my Superiors to be made according to Gods Word.

Nothing necessary to authorize me to those Ministrations is wanting that I know of. I am Christs Commissioned Officer; and I do not find that he hath revoked the authority which I have received from him; And without the warrant of his Law no man can take it from me. Nor do I find, that the nature of this Office, or the declared will of Christ requires,

(84)  
requires; that it be exercised no otherwise than in subordination to a Diocesane Bishop.

That I do not exercise the Ministry under the regulation of the Bishop of the Diocess, and in other circumstances according to the present established Order; the cause is not in me, who am ready to submit thereunto; but a bar is laid against me by the injunction of some terms in the lawfulness whereof I am not satisfied, whereof I am ready to give an account when it is required.

I do not understand that I am under any Oath or Promise to exercise the Ministry, no otherwise than in subordination to the Bishop, or the Ordinary of the Place. The promise made at my Ordination to obey my Ordinary and other chief Ministers, to whom the government and charge over me is committed, concerns me only as a Presbyter, standing in relation to the Bishop or Ordinary, as one of the Clergy of the Diocess; or other peculiar Jurisdiction, in which relation I do not now stand, being cast out and made incapable thereof. Moreover, in whatsoever capacity I now stand, the said Promise must be understood either limitedly or without limitation. If limitedly, as in things lawfull and honest, (as I conceive it ought to be understood) then I am not bound by it in the present case. For it is not lawfull nor honest for  
me

( 5 )  
wise me, to comply with the now enjoined Con-  
formity against my conscience, or in case of  
such necessitated non-compliance, to desist  
from the Ministry that I have received in the  
Lord. If it be understood without limitation,  
it is a sinfull promise in the matter thereof, and  
thereupon void. Absolute and unlimited o-  
bedience to man may not be promised. Let  
it be considered also that the objected pro-  
mise could not bind me to more than the Con-  
formity then required. But since my Ordina-  
tion and Promise then made, the state of Con-  
formity hath been much altered by the injun-  
ction of more, and to me harder terms than  
formerly were enjoined. When I was Or-  
dained, I thought that the terms then requir-  
ed were such as might be lawfully submitted to.  
But young men (such as I then was) may be  
easily drawn to subscribe to things publickly  
enjoined, and so become engaged, before they  
have well considered.

The Ordainer or Ordainers, who designed  
me to this Office of Christs donation, and not  
theirs, could not by any act of theirs lessen it  
as to its nature or essential state. Nor can they  
erogate from Christs authority over me, and  
the obligation which he hath laid upon me,  
to discharge the Office with which he hath  
entrusted me.

That a necessity is laid upon me in my pre-  
sent

sent state to preach the Gospel, I am fully perswaded, in regard of the necessities of Souls which cry aloud for all the help that can possibly be given by Christs Ministers, whether Conformists or Nonconformists. The necessary means of their Salvation is more valuable than meer external Order or Uniformity in things accidental.

I receive the whole Doctrine of Faith and Sacraments, according to the Articles of the Church of *England*, and am ready to subscribe the same. I have joyned, and still am ready to joyn with the legally established Churches in their publick Worship. The matter of my sacred Ministrations hath been always consonant to the Doctrine of the Reformed Churches, and particularly of the Church of *England*. I meddle not with our present differences, but insist on the great and necessary points of Christian Religion. I design not the promoting of a severed Party, but of mee Christianity or Godliness.

I am willing to comply with the will of my Superiors as far as is possible with a safe conscience, and to return to my Ministerial station in the Established Churches, may I be but dispensed with in the injunctions, with which my conscience, till I be otherwise informed, forbids me to comply. In the whole of my dissent from the said injunctions, I can  
no

full not be charged with denying any thing essen-  
 tial to Christian Faith and Life, or to the  
 constitution of a Church, or any of the weigh-  
 ty matters of Religion, or with being in any  
 thing inconsistent with good Order and Go-  
 vernment.

My Case, as I have sincerely set it forth, I  
 humbly represent to the Clemency of my Go-  
 vernours, and to the charity, equity and candor  
 of all Christs Ministers and People. I am sure  
 design to follow after the things which make  
 for Peace; and I hope I am not mistaken in  
 the way to it.



F. C.

F I N I S.

**Books lately Printed for**  
*Tho. Parkhurst at the Bible*  
*and Three Crowns in Cheap*  
*side.*

**O***ne Hundred of Select Sermons*  
*upon several occasions, by Tho*  
*Horton, D. D.*

*Sermons on the 4th. Psal. 42. Psal. 51*  
*and 63. Psal. by Tho. Horton, D. D.*

*A Compleat Martyrology, both of Fo*  
*raign and English Martyrs, with th*  
*Lives of 26 Modern Divines, by Sam*  
*Clark.*

*A Discourse of Actual Providence*  
*by John Collings, D. D.*

*An Exposition on the 5 first Chapter*  
*of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, by*  
*Charles Phelpes.*

*A Discourse of Grace and Temptat*  
*on, by Tho. Froyfall.*

*The Revival of Grace. Sacrament*  
*Reflections on the Death of Christ*  
*Testator.*

*A Sacrifice and Curse, by John Hur*



*A Glimps of Eternity to Awaken Sinners and Comfort Saints, by Ab. Coley.*

*Which is the Church, or an Answer to the Question, Where was your Church before Luther? by Rich. Baxter.*

*The Husbandmans Companion, or Meditations sutable for Farmers, in order to Spiritualize their Employment, by Edward Bury.*

*Mr. Adams Exposition of the Assemb. Catechism, showing its Harmony with the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England.*

*The present State of New-England, with the History of their Wars with the Indies.*

*Popery an Enemy to Truth and Civil Government, by Jo. Sheldeck.*

*Spelling Book for Children, by Tho. Lye.*

*Principals of Christian Religion, with Practical Applications to each Head, by Tho. Gouge.*

*Almost Christian, by Matth. Mead.*

*Godly Mans Ark, by Edmund Calamy.*

*Hea-*

*Heaven and Hell on Earth in a good  
or bad Conscience, by Nath. Vincent.*

*Little Catechism for Children, with  
short Histories, which may both please  
and profit them, by Nath. Vincent.*

*Ark of the Covenant, with an Epistle  
prefixed by John Owen, D. D.*

*This Author hath lately Published  
this Book Intituled,*

**The Kingdom of God among men.**  
A Tract of the sound state of Religion,  
or that Christianity which is described  
in the holy Scriptures, and of things  
that make for the security and increase  
thereof in the World, designing its  
more ample diffusion among Professed  
Christians of all sorts, and its surer pro-  
pagation to future Ages. *Printed for*  
**Tho. Parkhurst.**



b  
e  
e  
  
d  
  
l.  
l,  
d  
s  
e  
s  
d  
o-  
r  
  
s  
e  
l